

*Thank you, Chair, for giving us the floor.*

*This is a joint intervention from the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), Oceana, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), The Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew), and the International Ocean Noise Coalition (IONC) that represents more than 150 Non-Governmental Organizations.*

*Indeed, EJF, Oceana, TNC, WWF, Pew, and the IONC find it truly regrettable that Observers were not given the floor to intervene under key agenda items 9, 10, 11, and 11.1. We recognize the challenges of holding this meeting in a virtual manner, especially with such an ambitious agenda to be discussed in plenary. However, we believe that time management could have been better, to ensure Civil-Society participation rather than penalizing the interventions of Observers. For many Observers, these agenda items are where the vast majority of priorities, and expertise, lie, and so, hopefully, the interventions would have added to the quality of debate and so it is a shame that they were missed.*

*In any case, we recognize the great importance of the topics covered by COFI, and appreciate the opportunity to observe. We believe it has become clear that the only way to afford the level of in-depth debate that these topics deserve, and achieve full participation, is through intersessional meetings. Therefore, EJF, Oceana, TNC, WWF, Pew, and the IONC fully support the proposal for a Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management, and encourage further work to that end. As an interim step, we support the proposal for a Friends of the Chair to ensure that there is a full proposal for a new Subcommittee for consideration by Members at COFI 35. However, we urge the Committee not to wait for finalization of that Sub-committee, and to agree on a mechanism whereby smaller groups can take up discussion on matters of importance immediately. And to ensure that any such forum considers the experience gained from virtual meetings to-date – noting the best practices set out in the OECD paper previously mentioned – and, especially, allows for full contribution by all participants of COFI.*

*Thank you, Chair.*